

Student Association, Once Funnel for CIA, Does Well on Its Own

Enrollment Climbs as Group
Sheds Its 'Liberal' Image;
Even Now, Who Can Be Sure?

CPYRGHT By JOEL E. BOXER

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✓The National Student Association is alive and well.

That surprises some people—especially some workers at the National Student Association, a confederation of campus student governments. In February, Ramparts magazine disclosed the organization had been a conduit for financing overseas operations of the Central Intelligence Agency. The story made headlines for a fortnight and led to discoveries that many well-known foundations were passing along CIA money to a myriad of organizations. In the wake of the disclosures, NSA officers were wondering if the association would survive through the spring.

The worries were unnecessary. Not only has the NSA survived, it has taken on a rosy (but not pinkish) new glow of health. "In a way," says NSA staffer Steve Bookshester, "the CIA mess helped us out by destroying whatever leftist, or Communist-front, image we had. The right wing was left with either admitting we were okay or claiming the CIA was run by Communist sympathizers."

As a result, many rural, Southern and Catholic colleges that had shunned the organization because of its liberal reputation have decided to join. Since February, 30 schools have joined the organization and only one, Brandeis University, in Waltham, Mass., has withdrawn. The organization now represents 331 schools with a campus population of just under 2 million. More than 1,200 of these students are expected to register Sunday for the NSA's twentieth annual convention, at the University of Maryland in College Park. Last year's convention drew only 850 students.

A New Look

The furor over funds caused leaders of the organization to take a new look at their aims and activities, and this has led to a sharp change in the NSA's emphasis. "We are now doing the types of things our member schools want us to do," says Mr. Bookshester.

By late 1965, when the NSA had become almost a branch of the CIA, the student organization was spending 85% of its budget on foreign projects, such as taking foreign students on speaking tours of the U.S. and sending NSA staffers abroad to meet with foreign students (and to report on those meetings to the CIA). Now, less than 10% of NSA's budget is for foreign work, according to W. Eugene Groves, NSA president.

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Mr. Groves, whose Washington office bears a plaque for the "Outstanding Young Dupe of America Award," says all ties with the CIA were eliminated by the first of this year. He says most of the organization's \$635,000 budget for this year is "clean money" from major foundations or such nonsecretive Government agencies as the Office of Economic Opportunity, the principal antipoverty agency. This money, along with about \$18,000 in dues, is used for tutorial projects, community action programs, film festivals and the like.

No one, except perhaps some CIA auditors, knows just how much money the CIA gave the National Student Association over the past 15 years. NSA's files are incomplete for any year before 1960, and the organization just recently hired its first accountant. But in the year ended Sept. 30, 1964, the CIA contributed \$370,000 of the NSA's \$440,000 budget. In fiscal 1965, the CIA supplied \$440,000 of a \$760,000 budget and in fiscal 1966 the CIA supplied \$355,000 of a \$725,000 budget.

Some Criticism Remains

Even though the roundly criticized link to the CIA has been severed, there still is some other criticism of the student organization. "The NSA leadership is on the make," claims ex-staffer Michael Wood, who wrote the expose for Ramparts. Mr. Wood is worried that the NSA will abandon its traditional liberal positions (it favors recognition of Red China and opposes any bombing in Vietnam) to placate its newly acquired conservative constituents and its new-found sources of funds.

President Groves dismisses such criticisms. He says that if the NSA has any problems they are the result of the "taint of the CIA."

Indeed, the CIA episode will not be soon forgotten by the NSA staff. Inside the entrance to the NSA office hangs a simple plaque that reads, "This is to certify that the Central Intelligence Agency has duly complied with the constitutional provisions for affiliation with the United States National Student Association, 'Nether' Region."

When a visitor recently asked an NSA worker if he could be sure the NSA was no longer receiving CIA money, the worker replied: "You have to trust the people you work with, but in the final analysis you can't be certain about anything."

The Central Intelligence Agency had no comment.

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